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Methods used in Ethnographic Inquiry in Alaska

The state of Alaska comprises about 364 million acres (or about 21% of the total acreage of the lower 48 states) of which an amazing two thirds are in federal conservation units (e.g., parks and wildlife refuges).

In 1994. the Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimated that humans harvested and consumed about 53-1/2 million pounds of wildlife resources within the state of Alaska.[1] This poundage does not include the enormous commercial harvest of resources such as fish.

Alaska's population is extremely skewed with respect to residence. About 80% of Alaska's 550,000 residents live in the major metropolitan areas of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. The remaining 20%, or about 120,000 individuals, live in about 200 small rural communities. The vast majority of these communities have less than 300 people.

The 20% of the state's population that is "rural" harvests about 44 million pounds (or about 80%) of the total wildlife consumed each year. Although large amounts of resources, especially fish, are taken from state lands, it is reasonable to estimate that about 30 million pounds of wildlife resources are extracted from lands managed by federal resource managers.

Ownership of Lands in Alaska	**Acreage** (millions of acres)
U.S. Bureau of Land Management	92.4
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	75.4
State	84.7
National Park Service	50.6
Forest Service	23.2
Native	35.1
Private	2.6
Total	364
Total Federal Conservation Units	**241.6**

The vast scale of the Alaska landscape when combined with the small number of enforcement personnel have significant implications for agency control and authority. In the huge areas of the sub-arctic and arctic regions, regulating the harvest of wildlife resources on a day-to-day basis often devolves to the local communities and their customary and traditional practices. Communities and regional entities often request that their local knowledge of a resource be included in resource management decisions. For their part, most land managers realize that to achieve their conservation objectives and to be effective managers require the incorporation of local perceptions and values in their management decisions. It is at this interface that cultural anthropologists can make substantial contributions.

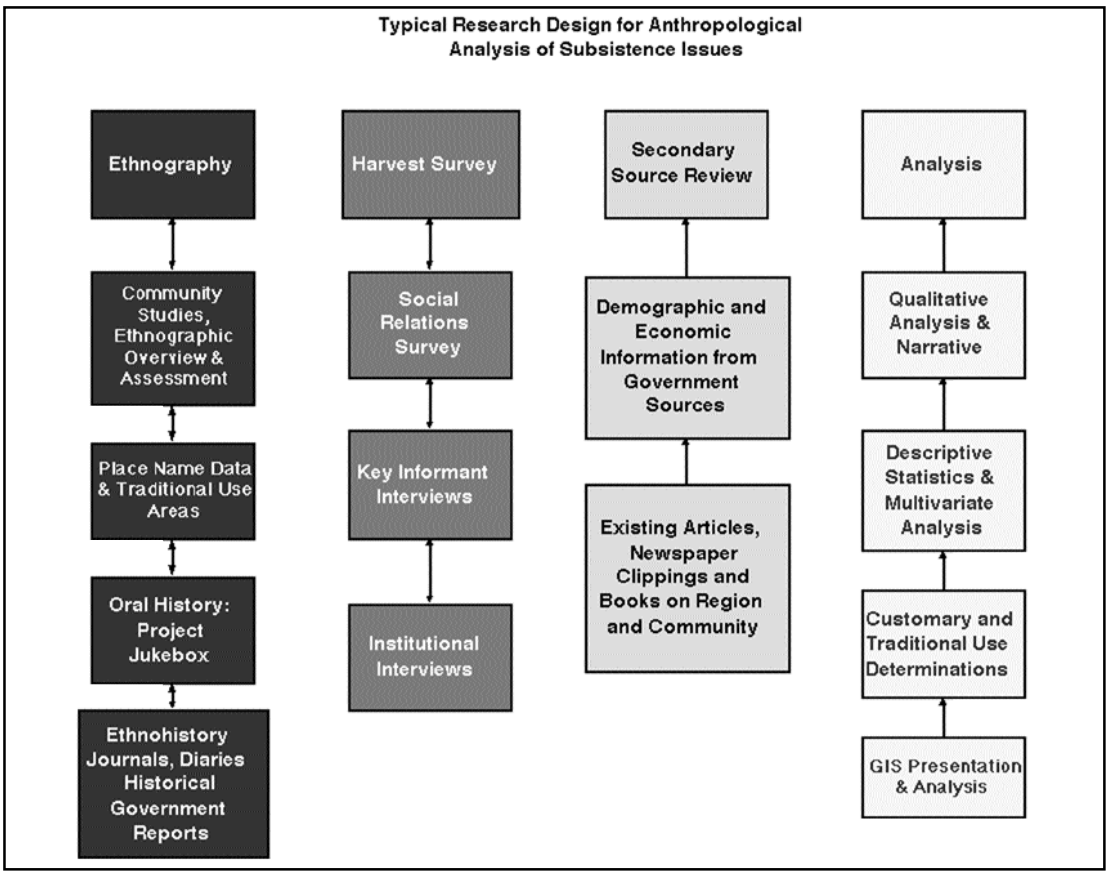
Integral to all this discussion is the awareness that management of natural resources is a process framed by social attitudes, cultural beliefs, multiple jurisdictions, and a variety of vested economic and political interests. Ethnography and other social science methodologies can help us to understand and communicate the importance of these vested interests to resource managers.

> Intimate knowledge of traditional resource use will allow National Park Service managers to respond to stakeholders in culturally appropriate ways.[2]

Ethnographic Community Studies

The 1994 draft report, "Ecosystem Management in the National Park Service," recommends that the National Park Service:

> Initiate broader data collection to assess better the needs, attitudes, and values of local communities. This should include census data, Department of Commerce data, state and private economic data, intensive stakeholder surveys, and ethnographic assessments. Data should be coordinated between agencies and other partners to improve quality and access.[3]



In Alaska, the National Park Service (NPS) has employed a variety of anthropological methodologies to obtain local and regional information critical to resource management decisions. Standard ethnographies have been commissioned by the NPS and other agencies to provide a detailed contextual understanding of individual communities. For example, *Nuvendaltin Quht'ana, The People of Nondalton,*[4] co-authored by an anthropologist and a former Dena'ina park ranger, provides an in-depth description of numerous topics including Dena'ina environment, population shifts to sedentism, kinship and band organization, and a detailed consideration of "Living with the Land: The Inland Dena'ina Year."

There have also been a number of ethnographic overviews and assessments, described by Mason and Cohen in another paper in this anthology that have topical specialists provide a comprehensive overview of the existing anthropological literature on a particular group or community affiliated with an Alaskan park or preserve.

Survey Research

These ethnographic details—when coupled with information collected from anthropological survey research of the harvest, processing, and distribution of wildlife resources—provide invaluable validation of Dena'ina rights to harvest resources on conservation units. They also provide resource managers with the details of traditional practices that can be linked to western management practices of setting of seasons (when to harvest resources) and bag limits (amount that can be harvested).

The table below, from an Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Subsistence Division, harvest survey for the Nondalton com-

Resource Category	Estimated Number	Per Capita Pounds
All Resources		1174.78
Fish	98,015	943.30
Salmon	53,756	768.67
Non-Salmon Fish	44,259	174.63
Land Mammals	856	199.15
Large Land Mammals	255	179.54
Small Land Mammals	602	19.62
Birds and Eggs		8.71
Vegetation		23.62

munity in 1983, is another example of the methodologies employed by cultural anthropologists working in Alaska. In this case, it illustrates the more formal social science methods of survey research.

Oral Histories

Other anthropological methodologies include the collection of oral histories. In some cases traditional life histories are recorded and transcribed. Normally in this process an elder or other informant selects incidents, topics, and themes from their life to recount with very little prompting from the anthropologist. Often life histories are followed by more systematic consideration of specific topics, e.g., the location of traditional use areas.

The Oral History Program at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, in collaboration with the NPS, has in a number of instances turned these oral histories into "project jukeboxes." A group of oral histories from a specific community (or on a specific topic) are integrated into a multimedia package that is returned to the community. The oral history tapes are digitized, indexed, and are linked (using HTML) with photos, maps, or video clips. Anyone in the community, but especially students, can access these files using a computer. The student may listen to the elder's life history from beginning to end, view the transcript in English, view photos of the elder or the elder's extended family, search topically through all the oral histories for specific issues or view maps with place names that include hypertext links to a pronunciation of that name or may contain a narrative about that place.

Place Name Data

The NPS has also supported the collection and digitizing of extensive place name data. James Kari's work among Athabascan groups in Alaska is a premier example of this kind of work. For example, his "Native Place Names Mapping in Denali National Park and Preserve"[5] inventories and identifies 1,650 features for five Alaska Native groups associated with Denali National Park and Preserve. Index maps show how the Athabaskan language boundaries transect the park area and describe numerous rule-driven features of Athabaskan place names, e.g., Athabascans virtually never name places after people. In addition, Kari demonstrates that place names occur in place name networks, where names with similar structural and semantic properties are inter-linked across huge bio-regions and shows how Athabaskan place names function as signs on a mental map and are vital for orientation in the band's large land use area.

Kari notes:

> There are numerous rule-driven features of the names that facilitate memorization. There is an economy of naming that emphasizes the master stream drainage system and the cluster of a couple of names around prominent features.[6]

Some of the place name data has been digitized, is available through GIS, and allows resource managers, for example, to apprehend traditional use areas. Similar place name investigations are being carried out by Tom Thorton with Tlingit informants in southeast Alaska.

Special Topics, Traditional Knowledge

Several ethnographic inquires have been directed toward specific topics. For example, the documentation of plant use by communities in the Lake Clark area used a variety of methods including surveys, key informant interviews, and mapping.[7] The impact of NPS regulations on traditional cabin use in Denali[8] and traditional knowledge of brown bears on the Seward Peninsula[9] utilized key informants and participant observation.

Other projects, not yet finalized, include:

- a network analysis of the production and distribution networks for subsistence resources within communities in northwest Alaska. This project employed harvest surveys, genealogies, historical census data and sophisticated multivariate cluster analysis to demonstrate the fundamental importance of kin networks in the harvest and sharing of wildlife resources.
- a comprehensive study of the use of gull eggs by the Tlingit in southeast Alaska is providing wonderful insights into the traditional use, preservation and conservation of glucous winged gull populations by the community of Hoonah.

Summary

Anthropologists in Alaska employ a multimethod approach to research. This approach combines ethnographic narrative, a solid descriptive cornerstone which often presents the community point of view with formal survey research designs that provide representative quantitative data.

Notes

1 Wolfe, R.J., and R. G. Bosworth. "Subsistence in Alaska: 1994 Update," Juneau: Division of

Subsistence, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1994.
2 Dennis, John et al, "Draft Report: Ecosystem Management in the National Park Service," Washington, DC.: National Park Service, (1994):14
3 Ibid. p.15
4 Ellanna, Linda J. and Andrew Balluta, *NUVENDALTIN QUHT'ANA, The people of Nondalton,* Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C., 1992.
5 Kari, James, "DENA'INAQ' TITAZTUN, Draft Final Report: Native Place Names Mapping in Denali National Park and Preserve," NPS, Denali National Park and Preserve, through contract with Alaska and Polar Regions Department, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Fund #337662, 1999.
6 Ibid. p.11
7 Johnson, Darryll R., Eugene Hunn, Priscilla Russell, Mark Vande Kamp, Edmund Searles, "Subsistence Uses of Vegetal Resource In and Around Lake Clark National Park and Preserve," Technical Report NPS/CCWSOUW/NRTR-98-16, NPS D-19, University of Washington Field Station, USGS-BRD-FRESC, College of Forest Resources, Box 353100, Seattle, Washington 98195-2100, 1998.
8 Johnson, Darryll R. and Dianne Gudgel-Holmes, "Traditional Use of Cabins and Other Shelters in the North Additions to Denali National Park and Preserve, Technical Report NPS/CCSOUW/NRTR-99-02, NPS D-290, University of Washington Field Station USGS/BRD/FRESC, College of Forest Resources, Box 352100, Seattle, Washington 98195-2100, 1999.
9 Georgette, Susan, "Brown Bears on the Northern Seward Peninsula, Alaska: Traditional Kowledge and Subsistence Uses in Deering and Shismaref," Technical Paper No. 248, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, Juneau, Alaska, 2001.

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Rachel Mason and Janet Cohen

The Subsistence-Flavored Ethnography of the Alaska Region

In Alaska, state and federal laws regulate the harvest of wild food for personal or family consumption. Controversy has flared for decades over the proper management of these subsistence harvests. The 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) gave a priority for subsistence harvests to rural residents. In 1989, a Ninth Circuit Court decision declared that under the Alaska constitution, all state residents should have equal access to harvests for personal use. Because of the state's failure to comply with federal law, the Federal Subsistence Management Program was established in 1990 to manage wildlife hunting on federal public lands under the terms of ANILCA. The program expanded in 1999 to include fisheries in navigable waters. As a federal landholder, the National Park Service is, with the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Forest Service, one of the five lead agencies in the interagency Federal Subsistence Management Program.

Since its inception, the federal subsistence program has recognized the need for cultural anthropologists and their ethnographic expertise in documenting traditional uses of wild foods. In addition to ethnographic projects for specific park units, Park Service ethnographers are regularly asked to provide technical assistance to the federal program. Frequently this is rapid, policy-directed research that tends to synthesize and review other anthropologists' work. This article describes some of these research projects.

Customary and Traditional Uses

One such type of research is to collect and analyze data for Customary and Traditional (C&T) Use Determinations. Proposals for these determinations request that a particular community or group of communities within a